Plate IX

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Young Tuareg woman of noble class brushing her teeth with an irak stem. Notice behind her the mat called asaber used to surround the tent.

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Young Tuareg couple seated in the shelter of the asaber. Behind them is a household servant, a taklit of Sudanese origin.

182 and the Tuareg of the Ahaggar as a nation, too stubborn to adapt themselves to any way of life other than their own, have at last signed their name to the ever-lengthening list of vanishing peoples.

342 Shelter. The typical dwelling of the Ahaggar Tuareg is a leather tent, made preferably of the skins of goats although sometimes those of sheep or even calves are used (fig. 36). A tent of mouflon skins is considered the height of luxury and elegance, but it is almost impossible to come by enough of them to make such a tent nowadays. The prepared skins are 281 very soft and have a pleasing dull red brick 342 color which is produced by rubbing them on both sides with a mixture of red ocherous clay and dried camel dung. After being prepared and cut down to rectangular form, they are sewed together with fine strips of leather. Anywhere from 30 to as many as 150 may be used to make a single tent, but the first number is not far below the average. A finished tent of ordinary size weighs about 50 pounds more or less.

342 Tents are mounted on wooden frames of various closely similar types, the most common of which consists of three elements, each composed of two uprights with a horizontal member laid across their tops. The highest element is set in the middle with one upright in front and the other in the back, and the two remaining elements are set up parallel to it, one on either side. The tent covering is then stretched over this framework, with its back and sides pegged down and the front left open, usually facing south. In good weather the overhanging front of the roof is stretched out horizontally to form an awning held in place by three supplementary posts, one in the middle and another at each end. The average tent is 6 to 10 feet deep from front to back, 10 to 15 feet wide and 4 to 5 feet high in the middle, with the roof sloping away very gently on both sides and toward the back wall. The structure is completed by [285] long strips of stiff, yellow matting made of ● 351 thin reeds, roughly 3 feet wide and up to 20 feet long more or less, with simple geometric designs in black or reddish brown leather ribbon woven into them. These strips are set on edge around the inside of the tent so as to make an inner wall at the back and sides,

351 and are extended out in front to form a sheltered enclosure which is usually semicircular with the entrance opening in the middle. The little forecourt and the ground inside the tent as well are covered with clean sand or very fine gravel from the bed of a nearby stream. Tuareg camps are always very tidy and astonishingly clean.

562 342 Both in the forecourt and in the tent itself the men's place is on the right as you enter and the women's and children's on the left, which is the reverse of the arrangement customary among Arabs. It has often been said that the men's place is on the East, but this is simply because tents are almost always pitched facing south.

352 [439] [415] [412] Household furniture and effects include sheepskins, or rugs obtained from the North by trade, leather bags of food and personal belongings, saddles, bridles and weapons, wooden bowls, funnels and spoons and maybe an earthenware cooking pot or two, a wooden mortar and pestle or perhaps two sets of different sizes, and a stone quern which may be either of the Neolithic saddle type or the small rotary model of the Roman Legions. Arms and food are stored in the men's half of the tent and equipment connected with food preparation in the women's half. A guerba full of water is hung from two long stakes just outside the forecourt. A brush [343] windbreak built nearby shelters the outdoor kitchen, and another windbreak, some 50 to 100 yards away, shelters the family slaves.

Sometimes in the hottest months, and particularly when a camp remains stationary for a considerable length of time as it does in periods so dry that it is dangerous to move far from a permanent water supply, the tents may be stowed away and zeribas set up in their place. We recall that these are cubical or cylindrical structures made of reeds, long grass or palm fronds laid over a wooden framework measuring roughly 10 to 15 feet across and 8 to 10 feet high (fig. 37, *a*). The Amenokal's camp was installed in zeribas when the writer visited it in November, 1955, near the end of an unusually long period of drought.

361 Camps are always pitched in an inconspicuous spot and always on high ground except on very rare occasions when the sky is cloud-

7:Nicolaisen E-5 (1951-1962) 1963 MS25 Tuareg MS25

may be seen in Fig. 167a–b illustrating baskets used for the manufacture of butter-milk cheese in Ahaggar. True coiled basketry is sewn with a little awl (*ístent*) (Fig. 218a).

The technique of coiled basket work is used in the manufacture of a great many receptacles among the Tuareg of Ahaggar, and coiled basketry made and utilized by these Tuareg can be seen in Figs. 184, 185, 196a–c, 210a–b.

The Ayr Tuareg apparently do not make coiled basketry to a very great extent, but they know a technique related to that used in Ahaggar, and also sew with a small awl (*éstan*). The reason why so many Ayr pastoralists make very little coiled basketry work probably lies in the fact that plates, bowls, and other receptacles of this type can be obtained at the market of Agadez at very low prices.

In the manufacture of plaited basketry the Ayr Tuareg are experts. They use the leaves of the dum palm for plaiting a great many different articles such as tent-mats, containers, and the like. When large mats and similar objects are made, the palm leaves are always plaited into narrow bands which are sewn together with pieces of leaves by means of a large needle (*tasubla*) (Fig. 220b). Plaiting dum palm leaves is one of the most important tasks of women among the *Kel Ayr*. Pastoral Tuareg of Ahaggar in contrast to those of Ayr do not engage much in plaiting basketry, and I believe that most of them are unaware of this technique which is known to all sedentary agriculturists of Ahaggar. The plaiting material used by these people is date palm leaves (*agum*) from which they make mats, bags, and similar objects. Baskets (*alegutguten*) like that reproduced Fig. 211 are manufactured by sedentary agriculturists of Abalessa and are sometimes used by pastoral Tuareg. Another type of plaited basket is that illustrated Fig. 135. It is made from palm leaves and has two handles made from palm bast twisted into a rope which is sewn into the basket by means of the large needle (*tasugla*, or *tasubla*) (Fig 220b). This basket type (*tésenit*) is widely found throughout Northern Africa among sedentary people of the oases and in the Atlas. The sedentary agriculturists of Ahaggar use baskets of this kind for many different purposes, and they play a part in agricultural work, e.g., to carry fresh soil to the gardens (p. 191) and to remove soil when digging and cleaning out foggara canals.

The Tuareg have a third technique which can adequately be mentioned in connection with plaiting, namely the manufacturing of mats from the stems of the *afezu* grass (*Panicum turgidum*). These mats are made from straws placed parallel to each other and fixed together by means of strips of leather. These mats are known as *éseber* or *tésebert* according to their use and size. They play an important part in Ahaggar where they are used as a kind of windscreen surrounding all tents, and they are manufactured by many women among the *Kel Ahaggar* (Figs. 268, 269). Mats of this type are also made by some Ayr Tuareg for cheese manufacturing (Fig. 168), but Tuareg women of Ayr practise very little this particular technique of mat making. Large mats made from *afezu* stems are used for bed covers, and in rare cases also for windscreens or sunshades, but these mats, which are found in all Tuareg camps together with the large wooden bed (*tédabut*) (Fig. 212a–b), are not manufactured in Ayr but in the south, particularly by women of the *Igdalen* Tuareg. Mats manufactured by this method are used for an interior cover of the barrel-vaulted mat-tent (Fig. 265d); these mats are also imported from the south.

The Tuareg are expert at skin and leather work which constitues the most important craft in the

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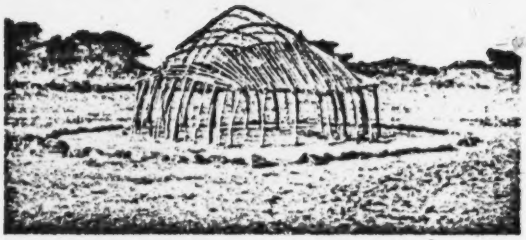

Fig. 261. The wooden skeleton of a large and very high *ẓhen* hut. The stone-ring serves to keep pebbles and impurities away from the dwelling. Ayr, Azzal.

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Fig. 262. An *ẓhen* hut covered with mats like those used for barrel-vaulted dwellings among pastoral Tuareg of Ayr (right). To the left a *téjira* hut. Behind the *ẓhen* hut a glimpse of a beehive hut (*tanṛami*). Many dwelling types are often found within a single village in the Sahara. Ayr, Awderas.

(3) To the three arches are now added two crossbars (*isgar*, sing. *ẓeger*), resting horizontally in slender forked sticks (*iseḳtan*, sing. *aseḳtu*) which are fixed vertically in the ground. The two systems of crossbars are placed parallel to the three arches to constitute the narrow sides of the hut structure. The number of vertical sticks supporting a horizontal cross-bar vary.

(4) A number of slender rods (*ilellewan*, sing. *alellewa*), which, as a rule, are made from midribs of date palm leaves, are fastened to the horizontal crossbars and to the arches which they cross at a right angle. These rods, or semi-arches, are fastened in the same way as described below for barrel-vaulted dwellings of pastoral Tuareg.

The main structure of a not too large barrel-vaulted hut as that just described is very akin to that of the portable barrel-vaulted dwelling of Ayr pastoralists, but very large huts of the Ayr villages

7:Nicolaisen E-5 (1951-1962) 1963 MS25 Tuareg MS25

*342 281 shape. In Southern Tuareg groups the skin tents also vary much in size, but they tend to be larger. Thus it is stated by Nicolas that skin tents among the *Kel Dennek* measure up to one hundred square metres (Nicolas 1938, p. 54), and Lhote says that 80–150 skins are used for sheets of the very large tents of the *Tengerregif* Tuareg (Lhote 1947a, p. 100).

[304] The Tuareg themselves do not refer to the size of a tent by counting the number of skins, or by measuring. The size of a tent is indicated by reference to the number of skin rows in the longitudinal direction of the sheet, and these rows of skin are known to the Ahaggar Tuareg as *tarda* (cf. Foucauld 1951–52, I, p. 247 ff.). I have myself seen extremely small tents having a sheet of only three *tarda*, but a tent of normal size will generally have four or five such skin rows, and some even have six or [462] seven *tarda*. Among the Northern Tuareg the sheet is manufactured in Tuareg camps by pastoral [562] women and their female slaves. Among the *Kel Dennek*, tent sheets are manufactured by women of [564] the blacksmith caste (cf. Nicolas 1950a, p. 155).

*342 285 A mat to be drawn around the lower part of the dwelling constitutes a very essential part of Tuareg skin tents. This mat is generally made from the stems of *afezu* (*afezu*) grass (*Panicum turgidum*) tied together with leather strips as already described. A tent mat at times is divided into two halves which are rolled up and placed at each of the narrow ends of the tent during hot weather so that currents [351] of air may pass through. When weather is cold and also when storms are raging, the Tuareg close their tents with these mats, which may also be drawn out to form a kind of low courtyard in front of the tent (cf. Figs. 267–269). The straw mat made from *afezu* stems tied to one another is known as *éseber* (pl. *isebran*) both among the Northern Tuareg and in Ayr, while the name of a tent mat among the *Kel Dennek* is *šitek* (cf. Nicolas 1950a, p. 154), or *chitek* according to our transcription system. Among the Northern Tuareg, tent mats are generally about one metre high, while varying much as to length. These mats very frequently serve as a kind of wind-screen leaning against poles,

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Fig. 267. Skin tent seen from the back. The shape of the sheet is most irregular. Ahaggar, the *Aǧuh-en-tehlé* tribe.

[text continues on p. 364]

7:Nicolaisen E-5 (1951-1962) 1963 MS25 Tuareg MS25

*342 285 and a mat-screen of this nature is known as *ərnes* (pl. *ɨrnesən*). It seems as if mats made from *əfezu* stems tied to one another with leather thread occur everywhere among the Tuareg who possess skin tents (cf. illustrations of Lhote 1947a). These mats form part of the tent as they constitute its walls. I have only once seen true plaited mats used with a skin tent, and this was not inhabited by ordinary [351] pastoralists, but by blacksmiths (cf. Fig. 272). In addition to tent mats the Ahaggar Tuareg frequently use stone walls (*amutey*, pl. *imuteyən*) in front of their skin tent during the cold winter season (cf. Fig. 269b).

*342 [281] Among all Northern Tuareg a skin tent is known as *éhen*, and the sheet is called *éhakit*. The *Kel Denmek* Tuareg appear to use the same words for a tent and its sheet (cf. Nicolas 1950a, p. 153) while the Ayr Tuareg reserve the word *éhen* for a mat tent and employ the term *akum* for a skin tent. The Tuareg who use the word *éhen* to designate a skin tent will refer to mat tents as *asala* or *éwerwer* according to the type of mats used for a covering. We see that the word *éhen* is that generally used for a tent among the Tuareg. It is used for skin tents and mat tents alike. The Tuareg who live predominantly or mainly in skin tents use it for these dwellings, while Tuareg who live almost exclusively in mat tents reserve it as a term for their dwelling type.

Mat tents and skin tents may resemble each other in their structures but can also be very different. The mat tent is always an arched tent while this is true only of some skin tents. The main distinction between a mat tent and a true skin tent is that the mat covering is attached to the tent structure, while the sheet of skin is fastened to poles, pegs, stones, or other objects outside the structure supporting the sheet. Among most Tuareg who have skin tents there is a traditional system of poles or pegs for the fastening of the sheet.

In Ahaggar the tent sheet is traditionally fastened to twelve poles which are buried in 0.40–0.50 m deep holes dug by means of the digging stick (*élaweg*; Fig. 123, p. 179), with the broad end of an iron lance, with a wooden stick, and/or the hand. There are three poles in front of the tent, three at the back, and three at each of the narrow ends. These poles have their particular names. The poles placed at the narrow ends are known as *tisdas* (sing. *tasdest*), the poles placed at the back are called *ənnusən* (sing. *ənnus*), while the three poles placed in front of the tent have different names as follows:— the middle pole, which is higher than the two other poles of this row, is called *igem*, and the two other poles are known as *madaṛen* (sing. *madaṛ*). The use of these twelve poles is considered the correct method for tent erection, and they are always used in wedding tents; some Tuareg have poles beautifully carved by the blacksmiths, but for ordinary use the Tuareg do not always attach their skin tent to these twelve poles, but frequently use a few poles and attach the sheet to heavy luggage and the like, and at the back they may even place heavy stones upon the skin sheet. The poles placed at the narrow ends of the tent, known as *tisdas*, are also frequently substituted by small wooden pegs termed *tisettitay* (sing. *tasettitit*), and the sheet is then very close to the ground at the narrow ends. This same system of poles and pegs for fastening the skin sheet outside of the proper structure of the dwelling is also known to the Ahaggar Tuareg who live towards the south in the Tamesna plains, to the Tuareg of Tasilé-n-Ajjer, and also, I believe, to the *Kel Aḍraṛ*. Among the *Kel Denmek* there is a related system apparently comprising a few additional poles. The terms mentioned for these poles by Nicolas differ in his studies from 1938 and 1950. According to his last study the poles placed at the narrow end of the tent are termed *šidel* (or *chidel*), while all poles placed in front and at the back of

7:Nicolaisen E-5 (1951-1962) 1963 MS25 Tuareg MS25

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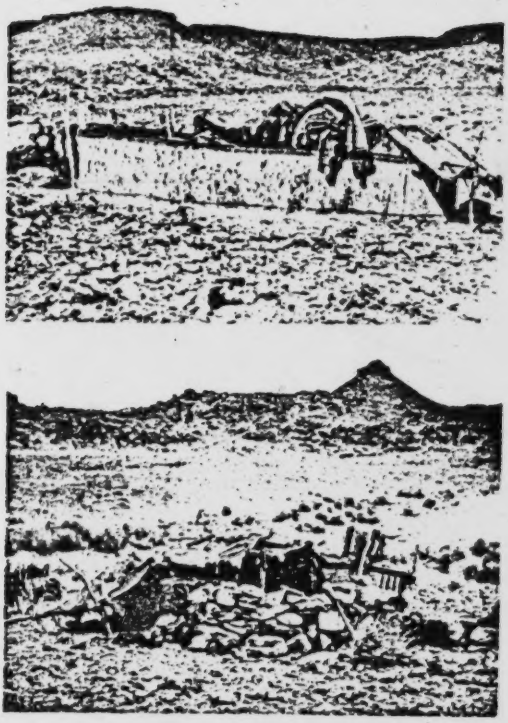

Fig. 269a–b. Skin tent of the B.2.f.3 type. The tent is surrounded by an *afezu* mat (*iseber*) and a stone wall (*amuley*) to protect the inmates against the cold winter winds. Ahaggar (the *Atakor* zone), the *Aguh-en-tehlé* tribe.

*342 the tent are called *igemawen*; but the frontal poles are also known by more particular names according to their position (*madaṛ, iġam, aserriri*). The terms mentioned by Nicolas in his 1938-study are largely those used in Ahaggar for similar poles (cf. Nicolas 1938, p. 54 ff. & 1950a, p. 153 ff., pl. VIII). It would appear that a somewhat related pole-system is used for suspension of the skin sheet among the *Iwllemmeden Kel Ataram* where very elaborately carved poles are found (cf. Lhote 1947a, p. 82 ff.), while among the *Tengerregif* Tuareg further west a large number of high unfashioned boughs or sticks are used to suspend the tent (cf. Lhote 1947, illustrations p. 128 f.). As to the Ayr Tuareg, I have never seen properly suspended skin sheets among them, and the *Kel Ferwan* Tuareg did not know any names for such pole systems. It would seem as if most Tuareg who live in skin tents use an almost identical system of poles to which they fasten the sheet. The sheet is never fastened to the